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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to the growing debate in Japan about how to teach Japanese students to speak English effectively. It is argued that there must be a shift from learning about the English language to using English to learn and communicate about topics that are interesting and relevant to students' lives in Japan. Role playing is an effective tool for accomplishing this shift. This paper is organized into five sections. In the first section role playing is defined and its various types are introduced. The next section gives the advantages of role playing. The following sections discuss the disadvantages of role playing frankly, and suggests possible ways to minimize and overcome these disadvantages. The next section considers how to adapt role playing to everyday Japanese situations according to proficiency levels, and the final chapter discuses how to evaluate students' performance, including debriefing and peer evaluation. (Contains 13 references.) (KFT)

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Role Play

Effective role play for Japanese high school students

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Introduction

Japanese teachers of English often say, "English teaching must be changed so that English is taught as a language, not as a subject." Every time the national syllabi are revised more communication centered approaches are insisted on. The new national syllabus, which was revised in 1999 and will be implemented in 2002, states that English should be taught so that students can communicate using it. However, as Kuroki (1996) stated, "both teachers and students still tend to stick to the traditional methods which focus on translating reading materials and reading materials, and reading texts for detailed comprehension" (p.10).

As Shih (1997) mentioned, "the teaching of EFL in Japan has emphasized gaining knowledge about the English language rather than using the language for genuinely communicative purpose" (p.20).

The actual situation Japanese students have is that they are supposed to sit still and listen to teachers in order to gain knowledge about English, and teachers themselves may think that if students aren't quiet, the class is undisciplined or the students' minds are on other things. This situation is not effective for their language development. According to Livingstone (1983), "an effective exercise requires mental and bodily activity, which will freshen concentration and interest, thus increasing the possibility of effective learning" (p. 27). Another reason why English teaching and learning in Japan is not communicative at all is that the fact there is no natural exposure to English in Japan. Japanese learners of English have no opportunity to use the language they suffer through in their classes. Students won't be motivated to learn English communicatively unless they have real chances to use it.

To overcome this problem, we should shift the focus from learning about the English language to using English to learn and communicate about topics that are interesting and relevant to students' lives. To do this we can make use of role play, in which students are not only exposed to English, but also encouraged to use it under more relaxed conditions. By using role play in Japanese classroom

settings, teachers can provide students with motivation and encouragement, and with a little pressure, which can be important to encourage them to speak out, as if they were placed in an English speaking environment.

In chapter I, role play will be defined and various types of role play will be introduced. Next, chapter II will give the advantages of role play. The following chapter will discuss disadvantages of role play and present possible ways to overcome them. In chapter IV, I will consider how to adapt role play to real Japanese classroom settings according to students' proficiency levels. How to evaluate students' performance in role play will be discussed in chapter V, which will also include debriefing and peer evaluation.

I. What is role play?

A. The definition of role play

According to one definition by Munby (1978), a role is "a set of norms and expectations applied to the incumbent of a particular position" (p. 68). Ladousse (1987) explains that a role is simply a part played by students (either their own or somebody else's) in a specific situation, and that play means that the role is taken on in a safe environment in which students are as inventive as possible. Di Pietro (1987) defines role play as an exercise which gives the student freedom to select and use his own language and accompanying para-linguistic and extra-linguistic behavior, without interference or guidance from the teacher.

While role play is artificial in that it is not real, it can represent the best approach available to simulating reality in a classroom. As role play involves the recreation in class of real-life situations, it can provide the goal orientation which is necessary for effective language learning. Simply, as Ladousee (1987) states, "the overall aim of role play is to train students to deal with the unpredictable nature of language" (p.6). Di Pietro (1987) mentions that role play can contribute to the students' sense of control over discourse in the target language because students are put into imaginary positions and asked to make conversation or elicit certain information.

B. Traditional role play in Japan

Role play is being widely introduced into Japanese classrooms now, especially in the classes where teachers are trying to make their classes more communicative. Unfortunately, however, most of those classes are not yet communicative, because the students practice and learn the role by heart, and perform the play for other students. The language produced is not natural. It is well-formed, but probably never said by any real person. We need to make this type of role play in Japan more interactive .

C. A variety of role plays

1. Role play and simulation

The definition of role play and simulation can be different, but the purposes of them are almost same in that students are exposed to English, and can or have to use it during the activity. In role play the student is not free to present his own opinion or personal view of the problem; he has to play the role of another person. While in a simulation activity, " each student is asked to work out his own attitude to the problem, and his own strategy for dealing with it," Livingstone (1983) explained (p.1). Di Pietro (1987) makes the difference clear between them as this way:

> Role play
>
> Students are given a " part " : student portrays someone other than self. [sic]
>
> Students are often told to what to do or think. Usually all the players know what others will say and do.
>
> Simulation
>
> Students play self within the framework of the role. Students are given a situation but not told what to think or do.
>
> (p. 67)

The example of a role in role play:

You are a high school student, and you want to ask your homeroom teacher if you can go home earlier to go to the hospital to see your grandfather who has been critically ill, and want to ask if your early leaving would be a problem.

The example of a role in simulation activity:

Your grandfather has been critically ill. But, if you visit his hospital, you have to be absent from a class which is very important to you. What would you do? What would you say to your homeroom teacher?

It is true that there is difference between role-play and simulation from language teaching and learning perspective, but classroom procedures are almost same. In this paper, both of them will be dealt with as role plays.

2. Problem-solving

Problem-solving is very similar to simulation; actually, problem-solving is included in simulation. A story is introduced by the teacher who stops at the "dilemma point." Students focus on the conflict which occurs at the dilemma point. Then they are supposed to decide how to deal with it individually or in groups. This problem-solving will be included as role play in this paper.

3. Situational role play and Open-ended role play

We can classify role play into two according to its nature: Situational role play and open-ended role play. Shoemaker (1991) explains that

> "in situational role play, students are given brief description of an everyday situation, such as moving to a new apartment and meeting a new neighbor. They are then assigned roles, such as the student who has just moved in or the neighbor who knocks on the door to welcome the student"
>
> (p.108).

A brief example of situational role play by Di Pietro (1982) goes as follows:

A: "Hello, I'm your next-door neighbor. Nice to meet you."

B: "Nice to meet you , too." (p. 15)

As he mentioned, the action is limited to the event and the student mainly focuses on how to use clear and specific words not on the contents. Situational role play is appropriate for beginning and intermediate students in that they can build self confidence in using English.

In open-ended role play, according to Di Pietro (1982), "new developments and/or new information are meted out in phases rather than given all at once. The intention is to emulate those occasions which often occur in real life wherein people are called to redirect their communication in response to newly introduced facts and events" (p. 16). A sample scenario of open-ended role play and actual

students' play go as following:

Scenario:

Ever since Keiko was in junior high school, she wanted to go to the States to learn English. Now She is 17 and was graduated from high school, and believes her parents should allow her to study for a year in the States. Her father, however, does not want Keiko to leave home. He feels that Keiko will lose a year of college by going to the States.

Open- ended role play:

Keiko: I would like you to allow me to go to the States to study English. Father: I'm sorry, Keiko, but I think you are too young to go to foreign country and live there alone. You can study English even in Japan. Keiko: But, father...

This open-ended role play can be extremely difficult for Japanese students who are not accustomed to thinking in English or producing English spontaneously. However, thinking in English and producing English spontaneously is inevitably required in real life communication. It may be true that this type of role play has been avoided in Japanese classrooms, but we should take a positive attitude in employing open-ended role-play because students can exercise their imagination and creativity which can also develop students' thinking beyond English. Open-ended role play is more appropriate for advanced students.

II. Advantages of role play

There are many advantages to role play and special reasons for using it. Ladousse (1987) indicates five aspects. First, role play provides students with a wide variety of experience, improving speaking skills. Second, they are required to use and develop phatic forms of language which are often neglected by the language teaching syllabus. Third, students can learn how interaction might take place in a variety of situations. He also mentions that role play can give shy students a mask, which encourages them to feel liberated as their own personality is not on "on display" in role play. Finally, Ladousse states that role play can develop a whole gamut of communicative techniques.

Cristina (1997) mentions, "Because role play is an interactive activity which allows students to use the target language for communication, it may help students gain confidence in their interactions with one another while using the target language at the same time" (p.2). He states that role play, in which students convey and reinforce information, can develop their language skills, increasing their motivation and interest, and teachers can teach the language and cultural awareness.

As a proponent of role play, I strongly agree with advantages mentioned, and will add other important reasons for using it. First, Role play is fun. I have noticed from my teaching experience many students becoming uninterested in English and being frustrated by the teaching in a grammatically focused class. However, I found, most of them were encouraged and more motivated in a class where they were able to use English through role play. Once students understand what is expected of them, they thoroughly enjoy letting their imagination be activated. I would go so far as to say that this enjoyment automatically leads to better learning.

Second, role play is effective in making advanced students' attitudes toward English more positive. Many students are learning English mainly for grammar focused entrance examination, and they can achieve a fairly high level of grammatical competence in English through grammatically focused classroom learning. Unfortunately, despite their competence, some of them

establish negative attitudes toward English and conversation in English. However, once they have become familiar with role play, most of them come to have positive attitudes. I believe advanced level Japanese students want to do something with English, but the fact that they are not given chance to use it reinforces their negative attitudes toward English. To activate and rejuvenate those who are losing interest in or motivation for communicative English, role play can be extremely effective.

Finally, role play has a great influence on teachers as well as students. One of the biggest reasons English classes in Japan have not been communicative is that Japanese teachers of English themselves are not communicatively competent enough. The teacher must have a high level of communicative competence to carry out communicative teaching, including role play. When teachers understand the effectiveness and importance of role play and employ it in their classes, they have to improve their communicative competence if theirs are not adequate to carry out role play effectively. Role play can be a good motivation for teachers to improve their English.

III. Role play: problems and solutions

Everything cannot be perfect. This is certainly true to role play. There are some disadvantages or problems with role play described in this section , as well as my own solutions to some of them.

In this chapter, I will introduce some disadvantages and problems, and then, present possible solutions. In addition to them, I will present some problems from a different angle in order to show that they are not the problems at all.

A. Classroom space

Livingstone (1983) mentioned the lack of the available space to do role play as one of the problems, saying "it is useless to suggest that role play groups be placed in extra rooms and corridors if there are not available. There is little to do about this problem" (p.30). However in most Japanese high schools, the decreasing number of students means there are some extra rooms where there is enough space for role play; there are usually soundproof rooms also. We can make use of this situation. Even in regular classrooms, there are platforms on which students can perform, and for practice they can move their desks and chairs to save space. In Japanese high schools, classroom space can not be a big problem.

B. Time

It can be true that role play takes up a lot of classroom time. I have often heard teachers say that they don't have enough time for role play in their limited time. The subtext is that role play is not worth the effort and time. If teachers understand the effectiveness and importance of role play for students' English learning, and if teachers respect the national syllabus which states that some aims of English education should be acquiring communicative competence, functional language skills and oral fluency, teachers would think it is worth taking up a lot of classroom time for role play.

C. Play- acting

As I mentioned in chapter I, in traditional Japanese role play, students practice and learn the role by heart, and then perform. First we have to define this activity as different from real role play. Livingstone (1983) explains as follows. "This activity is not role play as the language is pre-determined and learned by heart. This means that students need not monitor the speech of others with a view to formulating their own contribution to the discussion. No mental process other than memorization is involved" (p. 7).

However, this activity is effective for lower level students to instill confidence in using English. We could use this activity for beginning students as practice to improve their English and more toward situational role play, and then open ended role play. To make this activity more interactive, we just have to change a little. For example, just by adding the instruction that each of students should include an ad lib can make this activity more communicative.

Below is the example of a revised play acting activity I designed:

Level: Beginners to intermediate students

Time: 20 minutes

Aim: To instill confidence in using English

To encourage improvisation

Language focus: None

Organization: Pair work

Procedure: 1) Practice of the model dialogue

2) Presentation of the dialogue from some pairs

3) Practice of the dialogue which includes improvisation

4) Presentation of the dialogues from some pairs

5) Debriefing

Model dialogue

A: Hi! Did you watch the movie " Titanic " last night?

B: Of course. I was very impressed by the movie.

A: Me, too. But I couldn't study at all last night.

B: Oh! Don't worry. You studied English by watching the movie.

* Example of a dialogue with improvisation

A: Hi! Did you watch the movie " Titanic " last night?

B: Of course. *I love romance movies.* I was very impressed by the movie.

A: Me , too. But I couldn't study at all last night. *I went to bed soon after the movie.*

B: Oh! Don't worry. You studied English by watching the movie.

It is very important for the teacher to give students positive comments on their improvisation. In this stage, I would not correct students' grammatical errors unless they excessively undermined communication and understandability of the dialogue. As the students in this level are nervous about having an English conversation, they can be discouraged if the teacher corrects their mistakes often. By having a positive and generous attitude toward students' mistakes and errors, the teacher should encourage them to talk in English spontaneously.

D. Chaos in the classroom

Some teachers are afraid that role play activity can create chaos in the classroom, and it is true that the classroom can be noisy and in chaos if it is not properly organized. Ladousse (1987) describes some hints for classroom management to avoid this. First, he mentions that noise and chaos are different, and noise is only a problem if the teacher next door complaints. Second,, he insists on the importance of keeping activity short, using pair work rather than group work until students get used to role play. Then, he also mentions that teachers had better not use too difficult or too emotionally loaded role play. Finally, Ladousse advises teachers to have a follow-up activity for the groups that finish the role play before the others.

I will add that if the students know their performance will be evaluated fairly by the teacher and by other students, they won't behave badly during practice. We need to explain how their performance will be evaluated in advance. An effective way to encourage students or the audience to focus on watching the role play is to ask them to evaluate others' performances. This also can develop students' listening comprehension. For lower level students, who easily break into Japanese, I usually start with pair work and then information-gap role play as they are relatively easy. This can provide students with positive feedback and motivation for using English.

E. Lack of grammar work

It is undoubtedly crucial for teachers to teach grammar. It is definitely important for students to have grammatical knowledge, especially when the students are supposed to take entrance examinations. Teachers and students may think that there won't be any grammatical progress in communicative conversational classes where role play is employed. In many higher level Japanese high schools where most of students are planing to go to higher school, grammar-centered class is conducted even if the official name of the class is Oral Communication. They may fear situations lacking grammar drills and exercise. I can empathize with them, but we should make an effort to give students an opportunity to learn and reinforce grammatical knowledge communicatively. We could include grammar in role play. The example is as the following:

Grammar focus; The passive voice

Procedure;

(1) Explicit explanation of the passive voice

(2) Grammar drills and exercise

(3) Role play

1) Dividing groups

2) Giving the role

Example:

(Role A)

You want to go to Hokkaido with your friends during summer vacation. You don't have enough money, and your father may not allow it. Ask your father for permission. *You have to use at least one sentence with the passive voice.

(Role B)

Your daughter will ask you if she can go to Hokkaido with her friends. You don't want her to go there just with her friends. Try to make her give up the plan. * You have to use at least one sentence with the passive voice.

3) Preparation

4) Role play

Example of role play:

A: I want to visit Hokkaido. I was really impressed by its beautiful scenery when I saw some pictures. I could go there with Keiko.

B: Really? Keiko is your classmate, right? I'm afraid you cannot. You have to study hard this summer. You were given bad grade for English.

5) Debriefing

The teacher gives comments on role play, and also correct errors if the students didn't use correct passive voice.

By having grammar focus and using the sentence in role play, students can reinforce their understanding.

F. Lack of enough opportunity to participate

When I first began employing role play in my classes several years ago, I faced difficulties caused by the fact that only a few students had an opportunity to talk at any one time. During the activity I employed at that time (which are still typical in Japan,) four or five performers were in front of class

acting out a scene, while the majority of students were in their chairs watching. Those who just watched the play sometimes became bored, relaxed and noisy, which caused chaos in the class. To solve this problem, I found some variations. That is, some drawbacks of typical role play activities can be counteracted by increasing the level of audience participation. In the following sections are strategies suggested to this.

1. Summarizing role play

This is a simple way to let students focus on watching role play. The teacher tells students that they will be asked to summarize the contents of the role play in English or in Japanese. After each of the plays, the teacher gives students time to write summary on the paper he has given. This can also be listening comprehension practice and a way to develop students' writing skills.

2. Peer evaluation

The effect and procedure is almost same as summarizing role play. After each of the plays, students will evaluate the role play, writing comments. I will discuss this in detail later.

3. Asking (or making) questions

This is also a very simple but effective way to give the audience an opportunity to speak out. After each of the plays, students are given an opportunity to ask questions or to discuss the contents of the play. This can be done either in English or in Japanese according to students' level.

4. Guessing roles

Students are given roles of people all of the other students know. For example; celebrities, teachers in their school, students in the class and so on. During the play, the audience have to guess the performers' roles. After the play, they will write names of the roles on the paper, or voluntarily give answers.

5. Role-switch

This is what I sometimes use in my Oral Communication class where there are only 12 students who have already become familiar with role play. The teacher stops the play at a strategic point and assigns new students to take over each role, and then he/she stop the play again to have the original

performer take it over. This can be applied to advanced students or the students who have already got used to it as they need to speak English spontaneously.

I believe these approaches to role play can solve some drawbacks mentioned earlier. More responsibility rests with the audience, and more students have a chance and a reason to talk. We can adapt these strategies to our own setting and develop our own variations. From my experience, I would say that role play can be a whole class activity with a little adaptation.

G. Shyness of students

Sometimes students' shyness hinders their performance in role play. Even when students are linguistically gifted, it can be very difficult to make role play impressive if they are very shy and don't speak clearly or use facial expressions and gestures. There might not be a perfect remedy to make them excellent performers because shy people sometimes have difficulty in communication. I suggest two ways to make those shy students more active in role play.

One is to give students a little pressure to speak out. Shy students usually have a hesitation to speak out in front of other students, especially in English. When they are given an "order" to do it by the teacher and understand they have to, most of them give up being too shy to speak out and perform, and then they try to be active. Needless to say, too much pressure has the contrary effect. We have to be careful in giving them appropriate pressure.

Another way, is to create a comfortable class atmosphere for those shy students. They are extremely afraid of making mistakes and having them corrected in front of other students. They fear situations in which they are given negative feedback by the teacher. To let these shy students feel more secure teachers should be careful to correct their errors in a non-threatening and productive manner. Teachers should be always generous and supportive for students. It can take time, but gradually even those shy students, who once hesitated hated speaking and performing for other students, usually try to change their attitudes.

IV. Role play adapted to real Japanese classroom settings

Interaction through role play is effective and extremely important for Japanese learners of English in that they are put in a situation where they have to use English. To make role play more effective for Japanese students, we should organize and employ it properly according to students' proficiency levels.

In this chapter I will introduce some types of role play and activities according to students' levels.

A. Beginners

Most Japanese students are not yet accustomed to speaking and listening to English, even when they have a great deal of grammatical knowledge or a wide vocabulary. Especially for beginners, it is next to impossible to have a conversation in English spontaneously. If the students are not prepared and we pressure them to do it ignoring their level, it will only have a bad effect. They will be discouraged from learning and will lose motivation to learn English. For students in this level, oral practice and dialogue work would be better as a preparation for role play.

A simple example of oral practice is the information-gap. According to Livingstone (1983), "In classroom terms, an information gap exercise means that one student must be in a position to tell another something that the second student doesn't know"(p.52). Asking and answering following questions are not too difficult for beginning students. For example, " What time did you go to bed last night?," " What do you do in your free time?"

One of the examples of dialogue work is the skeleton dialogue. Livingstone (1983) explains that "skeleton dialogues give a very limited choice, and can be used where the situation and function are concrete " (p. 53). An example of a skeleton dialogue is as follows:

A: Good morning Ken. Did you study English for today's test?
B:_____. How about you?
A: Yes. I studied very hard..

B: How many hours did you study?

A: I _____.

The model dialogue can be introduced and practiced beforehand.

As a bridge to role play "play-acting" is also effective for students in this level. Although the exercises mentioned are not role play in that there is no real interaction between students, such exchanges are acceptable in the initial learning stages where the aim is first illustrated, and pronunciation, stress and intonation are practiced. Most of all, students can become accustomed to speaking in English. We should not hurry to use role play sunless the students are adequately prepared.

B. Intermediate

Hines (1978) wrote: "A teacher- written skit with repeated use of a structure which has been presented and practiced is one of the best role-playing activities for beginning and intermediate students" (p.127). I would add that student-written skits are also valuable for intermediate students as well. The procedure for a successful activity I designed is as following:

1) Model dialogue is introduced and practiced.

2) Students make their own skit using key expressions or grammatical items assigned in pair or in group.

3) After completing it, they practice the dialogue.

4) They present it in front of other students. At this stage, each of the students has to include at least one ad lib question in their dialogue.

5) Debriefing and evaluation.

Here is the example of situational role play by Shoemaker(1991) :

Situation: A large department store.

Role A: A businessman who is looking for a black leather briefcase with a lock.

He needs a new briefcase and would like one that is black leather.

It must have a lock that cannot be opened by a key. He will ask the

salesperson for what he wants.

Role B: A sales person in the briefcase and billfold department

She is a sales person who wants to win a trip to Las Vegas for selling

the most merchandise this week. A businessman asks to buy something

that she doesn't have, but she tries to sell him something else.

(p. 110)

According to class size, we have to decide the number of students in a group. Roles must be arranged and assigned to students depending on it. In this "real" role play, students are supposed to have an improvised conversation which is real interaction.

C. Advanced

For advanced students, we would like to employ open-ended role-play because as Di Pietro (1982) describes, "the open-ended scenario provides an opportunity for learners to become acquainted with those features, such as overlap and change of topic, which mark extended discussions " (p. 19). Shoemaker (1991) mentions that some of purposes are satisfied by open-ended role play because open-ended role play can develop students' sensitivity to the feeling of others, create a comfortable atmosphere which promotes understanding, and repair communication lapses in speech. He also points out the fact that open-ended role play can develop students' vocabulary.

The following is one of examples I carried out in my Oral Communication class.

Students: Intermediate and accustomed to role play
Time: 20 minutes

Aim: To encourage improvisation

Language focus: None

Organization: Group of six students

Procedure:

1) Divide the students into groups of three girls and there boys.

2) Ask girls to start up a conversation about how they can persuade their fathers to allow them to go to America by themselves.

3) Ask three boys who had been assigned roles as girls' fathers to persuade their daughters to give up the plan.

4) When time is up the activity must be closed.

Follow-up 1: The teacher corrects global grammatical errors which undermined communication or or understanding.

Follow-up 2: Ask students to list good and bad points of going abroad without parental supervision. The teacher should encourage them to talk only in English.

This is just an example of open-ended role-play. We can design various types of open-ended role play activities depending on class size class atmosphere and so on. This open-ended role play can be very demanding and challenging for Japanese students. It may require high level of English, creativity and imagination. Hines (1978) noted, "The more experience they have in responding to English words and tones, the more readily they will respond to others when they are not in class and that experience leads in turn to a greater expansion and refinement of words and structure " (p.127). I strongly agree with this.

D. Using Japanese textbooks of English

I originally designed role play for Oral Communication A and B classes, where we can enjoy some freedom not to use textbooks. However, I found, after designing many of role plays, that role play also can be used to develop students' reading and writing skills by using English I, II and Reading or

Writing textbooks. Below is a schedule I devised for teachers to follow when combining role play with reading and writing.

1). Students are divided into groups of four or five. Each group is assigned a section of the lesson from which to create their role play.

2). Each group member creates a list of the main contents or events in the section.

3). Group members discuss them and decide on one event or contents in the section.

4). They create scenes with dialogues depicting it.

5). Students prepare and practice role play.

6). Each group perform role play.

7). After the performance, group members answer questions from other students. Group members must stay in the role of the characters they portrayed in the role play. They are supposed to speak only in English.

We can make this type of role play more focused on reading or writing. This role play activity can be done as a pre-reading (writing) activity as well as a follow-up activity of the lesson.

V. Evaluation

A. Debriefing

Ladousse (1987) defines debriefing as a term used to refer to analytical discussion that may take place after role play. He also suggested that "the teacher should insist on evaluation rather than criticism, and make sure that the students talk about what went well before they get on to what went badly" (p.16).

In Strategic Interaction Di Pietro (1987) suggests four important points teachers should follow in debriefing. The first one is to "keep your priorities in order" (p.88). What he meant is that explanations are for clarifying not for building grammar that has no context in the speech event. He noted, " The priority in debriefing should be the edification of target-language use within the context of live performances " (p.89).

The second point he suggests is that we should "encourage students to take control of the discussion" (p. 89). He mentioned that an air of restraint may develop, which could discourage students from inquiring about matters that were really of concern to them, if the teacher dominated the debriefing. In order to lead students to take control of the debriefing process, he mentions that teachers should ask the class if they were able to understand each performer without difficulty and have the students who performed repeat what they said if necessary. He suggests that teachers should ask students if there were some grammar points that could have caused the difficulty and let some member of the class give the rule or provide a reasonable explanation.

Next thing he suggests is that the teacher should "establish a link to past debriefings" (p.89). He noted that the teacher could help the students to build a coherent grammar of the target language by giving briefings with a link to past class. What he suggests the teacher should do to give a briefing with the desired grammatical coherence is to keep track of what has been brought up from day to day. He recommends that the teacher keep a notebook in which entries can be made after each class, citing what points came up and in what context. I would add that we could make a plan before the

school year starts in order to decide which grammatical items would be taught through role play and when they would be taught.

Finally, he suggests that the teacher "keep explanation simple and direct" (p.90). When teachers answer questions from students, " they should try to remember the context to the phrase in questions in order to decide how to answer the question " (p.90). He also adds, "Whatever the case, the general procedure should be to give students enough information to be satisfied with an answer and not be confused by details that may only give rise to more questions" (p.90). We teachers are likely to give students explanations that are too long with unnecessary information. I remember a situation in which I gave my students a long detailed grammatical explanation after role play, which only made the students confused or bored. We should avoid this. Even when students' role play is excellent and impressive, it cannot be effective for their language development if there is no well-organized briefing time. The four points mentioned by Di Pietro must be respected and followed by teachers.

I believe, from my teaching and learning experiences, that English is something we can learn or acquire by making a lot of mistakes. At this point teachers should have a generous and positive attitude toward students' mistakes. During the debriefing phase, which can include recasting, suggesting alternatives, giving explanations and doing exercises of various types, we should be supportive to students. This encourages them to be positive about learning English.

B. Peer evaluation

The purpose of peer evaluation is to let other students focus on watching the role play and to make students more motivated. One of my students once said to me, "I like role play because my classmates can evaluate my performance." I often introduce some of the good positive peer-evaluation in debriefing time or in the next period of class. Students look forward to being given an evaluation from their friends. There can be various types of peer evaluation according to students' levels. Here is an examples of a peer evaluation card I designed:

Peer Evaluation For Groups

Your name:

Group members:

1. This presentation was organized:	1.	2.	3.
2. The presenters were easy to understand:	1.	2.	3.
3. I understood the main events in the role play:	1.	2.	3.
4. Voice:	1.	2.	3.
5. Tempo:	1.	2.	3.
6. Gestures:	1.	2.	3.
7. Eye contact:	1.	2.	3.

The role play would have been better if _____.

I like this role play because _____.

Peer evaluation should not be used by the teacher for grading because students often cannot evaluate objectively. It should be used to make role play and class participation better.

C. Teacher evaluation

To grade students, we have to evaluate the development of the students' communicative competence. It can be done subjectively, but we can use scales to make it more fair, correct and objective. Below is an example for Japanese students I adapted from Ur. (1996) introduced.

Accuracy	
Little or no language produced	1
Poor vocabulary, mistakes in basic grammar	2
Adequate but not rich vocabulary, makes obvious grammar mistakes	3
Good range of vocabulary, occasional grammar slips	4
Wide vocabulary appropriately used, virtually no grammar mistakes	5

Fluency	
Little or no communication	1
Very hesitant and brief utterances, sometimes difficult to understand	2
Gets idea across, but hesitantly and briefly	3
Effective communication in short turns	4
Easy and effective communication, uses long turn	5

Using this rubric, we can evaluate students' accuracy and fluency in the role play. To evaluate students' delivery, it would be better if we used the same scale used by other students in peer evaluation.

Conclusion

There are some problems to be solved to make role play more effective. One of them is the fact that role play activities often depend on the quality of individual characters and personalities. Occasionally, linguistically gifted students have limited performance skills, which can make there role play less effective. Some students have mental barriers against role play, and still have difficulty in breaking through them. I mentioned some ways to counteract disadvantages of role play in chapter III, but we need to examine scrupulously those problems and solutions.

For Japanese learners of English who don't have natural exposure to English, however, role play is undoubtedly effective and extremely important as it gives students the opportunity to practice English through actual interaction. To teach grammar in grammar-centered classes can play a crucial role in Japan. To teach grammar systematically to let students gain knowledge about English can be effective even when there is little communication in classes. However, as Shih (1999) said, "it is also important for students to be able to use English in ways that can enrich their personal lives"(p.24). As Hatting (1998) mentioned, "[role play,] can stimulate a conversation situation in

which students find themselves and give them an opportunity to practice " (p. 307). It is an ideal activity where Japanese students can use English creatively and imaginatively, developing their conversation skills.

As a concluding remark of this paper I will quote:

" A spoken message at the time it is needed, no matter how imperfect, is worth many unspoken messages, no matter how perfect."

Rubin and Thompson (1982: 66)

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